



Sixteen South Florida Hospitals Named among top U.S. Medical Centers in the Nation

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Sixteen South Florida hospitals were named to a list of the top U.S. medical centers on Wednesday, as rated by the nation's leading inspection and accreditation organization.

The hospitals made the list because they followed 22 recommended methods for preventing complications, infections and errors for at least 95 percent of patients last year, said officials of The Joint Commission.

Hospital rating systems have mushroomed in the past decade, but the new list of 405 top hospitals — 14 percent of the nation's total — gives consumers an easier way to shop for good health care. The nonprofit agency's opinion carries weight because it inspects hospitals and decides if they qualify to treat Medicare patients. It's the first time the group has rated hospitals.

"These hospitals are leading the way," commission President Dr. Mark Chassin said. "[They] have achieved an exemplary level of performance on certain key quality measures."

"The fact that it's The Joint Commission brings some extra credibility," said Kenneth Hetlage, chief executive at tax-assisted Memorial Hospital West in Pembroke Pines, which made the list.

The new rating helps consumers by analyzing detailed, hard-to-decipher data about which hospitals follow the best medical practices and boiling it down to a list of top performers, consumer advocates said.

But it falls short because it looks only at preventive steps the hospitals took, not which hospitals did best at preventing bad results, said Lisa McGiffert, a hospital watchdog at Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of Consumer Reports magazine.

"They're only giving you the good hospitals. It's the bad ones we need to know about," McGiffert said.

Consumers should not choose a hospital based solely on this list, or any of many other lists by governments and companies, said Linda Quick, president of the South Florida Hospital and Healthcare Association.

Typically, hospitals scores go up and down from year to year, so a hospital that does well now may be average next time, Quick said. Also consumers should think about which hospitals are covered by their health insurance, she said.

South Florida hospitals fared well overall in the rating. Sixteen of 49 in the region made the list, compared to 51 of more than 300 statewide.

In Central Florida, the only two hospitals to make the list were St. Cloud Medical Center and Central Florida Regional Hospital in Sanford.

Officials noted that the region's largest and best known hospitals did not make the list, including Broward General Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale, Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood, St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach and Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami.

All of those offer extensive, sophisticated and difficult medical care than smaller community hospitals. Said Quick: "The more complex the place, the harder it is to control it all."

The list also is dominated by hospitals in suburbs with higher proportions of insured patients, in contrast to larger institutions with high numbers of uninsured, lower-income and sicker patients who may delay medical care, Hetlage said.

The hospitals were judged on how often they gave recommended medical attention to patients hospitalized for heart attacks, heart failure, surgery, pneumonia and childhood asthma. The steps have been identified as likely to help prevent complications.

Among the steps they are supposed to take: Give aspirin to heart patients upon arrival, give clot-buster drugs for heart attacks, give flu shots and antibiotics for pneumonia, and give surgical patients drugs that prevent infections and blood clots.

The Joint Commission said more than 90 percent of hospitals now follow such steps, sharply higher than when the first widely publicized ratings came out in 2002.

The comparisons make hospitals improve through peer pressure, said Adam Higman, a manager at the hospital adviser firm Soyring Consulting in St. Petersburg.

But McGiffert, the consumer advocate, said rating organizations need to look deeper to list hospitals with poor records of preventing problems.

Broward County

- Memorial Hospital West and Memorial Hospital Pembroke, both in Pembroke Pines and owned by the tax-assisted South Broward Hospital District
- Cleveland Clinic in Weston, an independent nonprofit
- Northwest Medical Center in Margate *
- Plantation General Hospital *
- University Hospital and Medical Center in Tamarac *
- Westside Regional Medical Center in Plantation *

Palm Beach County

- Delray Medical Center **
- West Boca Medical Center **
- JFK Medical Center in Atlantis *
- Columbia Hospital in West Palm Beach *

Miami-Dade County

- Aventura Hospital and Medical Center *
- Coral Gables Hospital **
- Doctors Hospital in Coral Gables ***
- Kendall Regional Medical Center *
- South Miami Hospital ***

*Owned by HCA Inc.

**Owned by Tenet Healthcare.

***Owned by Baptist Health.

For more information and to view the entire list:

http://www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/top_performers.aspx

Other hospital ratings

Federal government: <http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov>

State of Florida: <http://www.floridahealthfinder.gov>

<http://www.wptv.com/dpp/news/state/sixteen-south-florida-hospitals-named-among-top-u.s.-medical-centers-in-the-nation#ixzz1Y37bcnux>